

REMARKS OF

THE HONORABLE
HENRY A. WAXMAN,
CHAIRMAN,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BEFORE
THE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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I AM PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO JOIN YOU TODAY FOR YOUR ANNUAL MEETING. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOUR PRESIDENT, ARCHIE GIVENS, FOR HIS HELP IN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR ME TO BE HERE, AND SPECIAL THANKS TO YOUR WASHINGTON STAFF--BOB VANDIVIER, CHRIS KOYANAGI, AND BETTY CROWLEY--FOR THEIR CONSTANT WORK AND SUPPORT.

THIS MEETING MARKS AN ANNIVERSARY OF SORTS, FOR YOU AND FOR ME. IT IS AN ANNIVERSARY A LOT LIKE THE ADVERTISEMENT FOR A NEW FILM THAT HAS JUST OPENED IN WASHINGTON:

"FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, THEY KNEW THEY WOULD BE FRIENDS UNTIL THE END. WHAT THEY DIDN'T COUNT ON WAS EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN."

AND THERE HAS BEEN A LOT IN BETWEEN.

JUST A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AGO NOW, WE WERE CELEBRATING AS PRESIDENT CARTER SIGNED A NEW LAW TO EXPAND THE FEDERAL C.M.H.C. PROGRAM AND TO CREATE PROGRAMS FOR THE CHRONICALLY MENTALLY ILL, FOR SEVERELY DISTURBED CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, FOR THE ELDERLY, FOR PERSONS IN NURSING HOMES, AND FOR OTHER UNDERSERVED GROUPS. THE LAW AUTHORIZED OVER \$400 MILLION FOR NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS.

THAT LAW HAS NOW BEEN REPEALED.

LAST WINTER, MR. REAGAN AND MR. STOCKMAN CALLED FOR THE REPEAL OF THE SYSTEMS ACT AND THIRTY OTHER HEALTH LAWS TO LUMP ALL OF THEM TOGETHER INTO UNRELATED BLOCK GRANTS AND TO GET THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OUT OF HEALTH CARE ALTOGETHER.

WITH YOUR HELP, WE HAVE PREVENTED SUCH SHORT-SIGHTED POLICY FROM BECOMING LAW. BUT MOST OF THE SYSTEMS ACT FOR WHICH YOU AND I WORKED SO LONG IS GONE.

AND, MEANWHILE, A LOT HAS GONE ON IN BETWEEN IN OTHER PLACES:

AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS PRESIDENT CARTER SIGNED THE SYSTEMS ACT, THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION RECEIVED A FOUR-PAGE LETTER OF CAMPAIGN PROMISES FROM THE REAGAN/BUSH CAMPAIGN. NOW THAT THE LETTER IS ONE YEAR OLD, LET ME REVIEW SOME OF THOSE PLEDGES WITH YOU.

THE LETTER BEGINS BY SUMMARIZING MANY OF THE PROBLEMS IN MENTAL HEALTH DELIVERY IDENTIFIED BY THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION IT THEN GOES ON TO OUTLINE COMMITMENTS TO IMPROVE:

RELATIONS WITH LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT,
PRIVATE SECTOR INCENTIVES,
SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, AND
SERVICES FOR THE CHRONICALLY ILL.

I WON'T SPEND THE TIME TO RECITE AND DEBATE EACH OF THE PROMISES AND PROPOSALS IN ALL THESE AREAS:

THE ADMINISTRATION HAS INSISTED ON BLOCK GRANTS--WITH REGULATIONS THAT MENTION SERVICES ONLY IN THEIR TITLE. THAT HAS UNDOUBTEDLY CHANGED INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH NOT EXACTLY AS THE STATES, CITIES, AND COUNTIES MIGHT HAVE HOPED;

AND THE ADMINISTRATION HAS CUT SOCIAL SERVICE MONIES BY 25-40% (AND PERHAPS MORE). THIS HAS CERTAINLY CLEARED THE FIELD OF WHAT THE REAGAN CAMPAIGN STAFF CALLED THE PUBLIC SECTOR "MONOPOLIZATION" OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT OBVIOUS WHAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR INCENTIVES ARE.

BUT I REPRESENT A DISTRICT WHICH CONTAINS A VERY LARGE NUMBER OF ELDERLY PERSONS, AND I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE RECOGNIZE THE REAGAN PRE-ELECTION PLEDGE TO THESE PEOPLE AS THE CRUEL RHETORIC THAT IT IS.

THE PROMISES OF SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY AT ELECTION TIME INCLUDED PROGRAMS TO:

"...PROVIDE OUTREACH SERVICES TO MEET THE PROBLEMS OF ACCESS TO NEEDED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES."

I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT JUST SUCH A PROGRAM WAS REPEALED AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST.

"...TO IDENTIFY AND ASSESS THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY AND PROVIDE SERVICES WHERE GAPS EXIST."

I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT JUST SUCH A PROGRAM WAS REPEALED AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST.

"...TO ASSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF PERSONNEL TRAINED TO PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR OLDER AMERICANS."

I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT JUST SUCH A PROGRAM WAS CUT ALMOST IN HALF AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST.

AND "...TO COORDINATE EXISTING SERVICES AVAILABLE TO
SERVE THE MENTALLY ILL ELDERLY."

I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT JUST SUCH A PROGRAM WAS REPEALED AT
THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST.

COMPARED WITH THE ADMINISTRATION'S CUTS IN MEDICAID, ATTACKS
ON SOCIAL SECURITY, AND SEVERE REDUCTIONS IN SOCIAL SERVICES,
THESE PLATITUDES FOR THE AGING ARE A BITTERLY IRONIC HOAX.

AND IF YOU READ FURTHER IN THE REAGAN LETTER, THERE ARE
PROMISES MADE TO THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION FOR SERVICES TO
PEOPLE WHO ARE CHRONICALLY MENTALLY ILL. THESE PEOPLE ARE, IN
MANY WAYS, THE POOREST AND MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS OF OUR
COUNTRY. THE CYNICAL DISREGARD OF THEIR NEEDS IS THE MOST
HEARTLESS POLITICKING OF ALL.

THE YEAR-OLD REAGAN LETTER CALLS FOR LOCAL PROGRAMS THAT
"MUST INCLUDE":

"...INDIVIDUALIZED TREATMENT PLANS" AND "...CASE
MANAGEMENT."

I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT JUST SUCH A PROGRAM WAS REPEALED AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST. YOU SHOULD ALSO KNOW THAT THE PRESIDENT REQUESTED THAT SUCH A PROGRAM FOR THE RETARDED BE REPEALED, TOO.

"...ACCESS TO NEEDED MENTAL HEALTH AND OTHER HEALTH SERVICES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY."

I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT JUST SUCH A PROGRAM WAS REPEALED AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST. I HOPE YOU KNOW THAT HE ALSO REQUESTED THAT "THE OTHER HEALTH SERVICES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY" THAT WERE FEDERALLY FUNDED ALSO BE ABOLISHED.

"...ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TRANSPORTATION."

I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT JUST SUCH A PROGRAM WAS REPEALED AT THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST. I SHOULD ADD THAT THIS IS CONSISTENT, SINCE MOST OF THE FEDERAL PROGRAMS FOR "SOCIAL SERVICES, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TRANSPORTATION" WERE ALSO REPEALED AT MR. REAGAN'S REQUEST.

"REGULATION OF PLACEMENT FACILITIES...TO AVOID THE HORRORS OF UNSANITARY AND UNSAFE CONDITIONS AND ACTUAL PHYSICAL ABUSE THAT HAVE MARKED THE LIVES OF SO MANY FORMER INMATES OF STATE HOSPITALS."

I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S NEW REGULATIONS FOR THE A.D.M. BLOCK GRANT DO NOT EVEN MENTION MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES OR FACILITIES BY NAME, AND THEY CERTAINLY DO NOT CONTAIN ANY MOVE AWAY FROM "UNSANITARY CONDITIONS" OR "PHYSICAL ABUSE."

WHILE MANY STATES HAVE IMPROVED THESE PLACEMENTS AND HOSPITALS TREMENDOUSLY, SOME HAVE NOT. BUT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT ATTEMPTED TO HELP THE "INMATES" OF THESE FACILITIES. INSTEAD THEY HAVE MOVED TO DE-REGULATE MENTAL HEALTH AND TRANSFER MORE AUTHORITY TO ALL STATES, NO MATTER WHAT THEIR RECORD.

IN FACT, AS EARLY AS MARCH, SECRETARY SCHWEIKER--WHO AS A SENATOR HAD VIGOROUSLY SUPPORTED ALL THESE PROGRAMS FOR THE CHRONICALLY ILL--WAS PREPARED TO TESTIFY BEFORE MY SUBCOMMITTEE, IN THE NAME OF THE ADMINISTRATION, THAT THE PROBLEMS WERE OVER.

I DO NOT AGREE.

THE NATIONAL PROBLEM OF MENTAL ILLNESS IS STILL VERY MUCH WITH US. THE PROBLEMS OF THE CHRONICALLY ILL AND THE RECENTLY DE-INSTITUTIONALIZED ARE PARTICULARLY DESPERATE.

IN RESPONSE TO THESE PROBLEMS, MR. REAGAN AND MR. STOCKMAN HAVE GIVEN US ONLY PROPOSALS TO REMOVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FROM HEALTH CARE ALTOGETHER AND TO CUT ALL PROGRAMS ACROSS-THE-BOARD, WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THE EFFECTS. THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONGRESS HAVE LEGISLATED FOR NUMBERS AND STATISTICS, NOT FOR PEOPLE OR DISEASE.

I DO NOT MEAN TO SAY THAT ALL IS NOW LOST.

THE ALCOHOL, DRUG ABUSE, AND MENTAL HEALTH BLOCK GRANT IS A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OVER THE ORIGINAL REAGAN PROPOSAL AND THE SENATE BILL.

FUNDS HAVE BEEN PAINFULLY CUT, BUT THE FUNDS REMAINING ARE CLEARLY DIRECTED TO THE TREATMENT AND PREVENTION OF MENTAL ILLNESS.

THE CATEGORICAL PROGRAM FOR THE CHRONICALLY ILL HAS BEEN ENDED, BUT THE BLOCK GRANT CONTAINS A CLEAR EMPHASIS ON THEIR NEEDS.

FEDERAL MENTAL HEALTH PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN DRASTICALLY REDUCED, BUT THE LAW CONTAINS A NUMBER OF PROTECTIONS FOR EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

AND, I MIGHT ADD, THERE HAVE BEEN DEEP CUTS IN THE MEDICAID PROGRAM, BUT WE HAVE NOT ENDED THIS FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO THE POOR, THE ELDERLY, AND THE DISABLED.

THESE ARE SIGNIFICANT VICTORIES FOR YOU AND THOSE WHOM YOU REPRESENT. YOU ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED ON YOUR HARD AND EFFECTIVE WORK.

I PARTICULARLY CONGRATULATE YOU FOR YOUR ACTIVE AND VISIBLE EFFORTS IN THE HOUSE. ON MANY OCCASIONS, EVEN DURING VOTES ON THE BUDGET, MY STAFF AND I WERE CONFRONTED BY MEMBERS--MANY OF WHOM ARE USUALLY UNCONCERNED WITH HEALTH MATTERS--WHO SAID THAT THE NUMBERS OF LETTERS, CALLS, AND VISITS WERE OVERWHELMING.

IT WAS THIS KIND OF CONTACT WITH THE CONGRESS--IN WASHINGTON AND AT HOME--WHICH HELPED TO PRESERVE SOMETHING OF HEALTH PROGRAMS WHILE OTHER VALUABLE FEDERAL EFFORTS WERE GIVEN UP ALTOGETHER. MANY THANKS AND CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU FOR WHAT GOOD NEWS THERE IS.

BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT THE STRUGGLE FOR ADEQUATE MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR ALL CITIZENS IS NOT OVER. THE ANNIVERSARY OF YOUR LETTER FROM THE REAGAN CAMPAIGN WILL NOT MARK THE END OF BROKEN PROMISES TO THE CHRONICALLY ILL AND THE ELDERLY.

MR. STOCKMAN HAS ALREADY STATED THAT HE PLANS TO PURSUE THE MEDICARE AND MEDICAID PROGRAMS AS ONE OF THE FIRST TARGETS FOR THE TWENTY TO SIXTY BILLION DOLLARS OF CUTS HE WANTS NEXT YEAR.

MORE OMINOUSLY, ONLY LAST WEEK HE SUGGESTED THAT THE "SOCIAL SAFETY NET" WAS A PHRASE WHICH DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING DEFINITE AND THAT THE PRESIDENT'S PROMISE TO PRESERVE THAT NET DOESN'T GUARANTEE THE PROTECTION OF ANY FEDERAL PROGRAMS.

AND THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE IS STILL TRYING TO DECIDE HOW TO ACT ON THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR A 12% DEEPER CUT IN ALL PROGRAMS, A CUT WHICH WOULD LEAVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE PROGRAMS WITH LESS THAN TWO-THIRDS OF THEIR 1981 FUNDING, AND RESEARCH WITH LESS THAN HALF.

I KNOW THAT YOU ARE--AS I AM--TIRED OF MAKING THE SAME ARGUMENTS TO THE SAME PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN PROMISE AFTER PROMISE IS BROKEN.

BUT THERE IS NO TIME NOW TO REST ON LAURELS AND TO FEEL SECURE IN LAWS SIGNED OR PROGRAMS SAVED.

YOU MUST RENEW AND STRENGTHEN YOUR TIES WITH STATE GOVERNMENTS. STATE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATIONS HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH MOST LEGISLATURES AND STATE EXECUTIVES. DURING THESE NEXT FEW YEARS, I HOPE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO USE THE BENEFITS OF THAT WORKING RELATIONSHIP TO PRESERVE THE PROGRAMS FROM WHICH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS NOW WITHDRAWING.

BUT I ALSO HOPE THAT YOU WILL MAINTAIN A STRONG FEDERAL PRESENCE, BOTH IN THE CONGRESS AND IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. I DON'T THINK THAT I NEED TO REMIND YOU OF THE HISTORY OF OTHER BLOCK GRANT LEGISLATION. I WOULD ONLY SUGGEST TO YOU THAT THE CONGRESS IS LIKE MOST PRUDENT BUYERS AND WILL NOT CONTINUE TO PAY FOR UNKNOWN QUANTITIES OR UNIDENTIFIED PROGRAMS.

IF WE ARE TO PRESERVE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH, YOU MUST CONTINUE TO REMIND YOUR REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SUCCESSES OF PROGRAMS AND THE NEEDS OF THE MENTALLY ILL.

AND YOU MUST REMIND THEM THAT THERE WAS A REASON WHY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BECAME INVOLVED IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

REMIND THEM THAT IN 1963, THAT REASON WAS THE 500,000 PEOPLE IN WAREHOUSE INSTITUTIONS.

REMINDE THEM THAT IN 1980, THAT REASON WAS THE ELDERLY IN
NURSING HOMES AND THE CHRONICALLY ILL IN "BOARDING HOUSES AND SLUM
HOTELS."

AND REMIND THEM THAT IN 1981, PROMISES HAVE BEEN BROKEN AND
YOU HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN.